

VZCZCXRO4277
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0729/01 1211157
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 011157Z MAY 09
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4762
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000729

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; TREASURY FOR AHERN/MOGER; NSC
FOR PASCUAL; JOINT STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2014
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS DESCRIBE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF
SEPARATION BARRIER IN JERUSALEM AREA

REF: JERUSALEM 327

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Reftel described the GOI's closure of a gap in the separation barrier north of Jerusalem. The now-sealed barrier runs between the West Bank town of al-Ram and East Jerusalem. The barrier generally follows the route of the Jerusalem municipal boundary, except where it cuts through the al-Ram neighborhood of Dahiat al-Barid, leaving a portion of that West Bank neighborhood on the Jerusalem side of the barrier. In this area, the wall cuts through the middle of the community, in some cases through residents' backyards. EconOff visited Dahiat al-Barid and al-Ram on multiple occasions in April to hear first-hand accounts of the impact of the closure of the gap. Photos of the wall in this area can be found on ConGen Jerusalem's unclassified website: (<http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/palecon>). End summary.

Closure cuts off businesses...

¶2. (SBU) Al-Ram's business community reports that it has been devastated by the loss of its East Jerusalem customer base. Adnan Kirresh, a furniture and car dealer located on the al-Ram side of the barrier, told EconOff he is suffering heavy economic losses. Referring to his former clientele, he told EconOff, "It's just not worth their time and frustration to wait at Qalandiya." (Note: People and cars that used to pass through the now sealed gap in the wall must use Qalandiya checkpoint - the primary crossing point for Palestinians between Ramallah and Jerusalem. End Note.) As a result, Kirresh has opened another furniture store on the Jerusalem side (doubling his costs), and plans to relocate his car dealership to Ramallah by the end of the year. "I have to go to Ramallah because I can't trust what is going to happen here," he said.

¶3. (SBU) Mahmud Hirbawi owns three clothing stores in downtown al-Ram. Hirbawi said he had to let go five of his eight full-time employees since the February closure of the gap, and he intends to shut down one of his stores before year-end. He told EconOff that blue jeans he previously sold for \$45, he cannot even sell for \$20. He said he is now without a customer base and would like to move his business to Ramallah, but cannot afford the relocation costs.

...and affects schools and students

¶4. (SBU) School administrators in areas of Dahiat al-Barid now on the Jerusalem side of the barrier report trouble for their students and teachers coming from al-Ram. Sister Hortense, principal of the Rosary Sisters School for Girls, said that her staff often arrives late and frustrated because

of conditions at Qalandiya. She said one of the school's teachers recently came to school in tears because she had been "humiliated" by the searches conducted during an hour wait at Qalandiya. Staff members leave their homes in al-Ram (a 10 minute drive without the barrier) before 6:00 to arrive at the school by 8:00. She lamented that IDF soldiers at Qalandiya require young students to get off the bus, wait in long pedestrian lines, and be searched on their way to school each day. She said that closures imposed for Israeli holidays and security threats also affect student and staff attendance.

15. (C/NF) Sister Hortense said she would lose students and staff next year because of the difficulties getting to school. (Note: Many Palestinians routinely tell us that families often refuse to send women and girls on trips that require passage through an IDF checkpoint. End Note.) She noted that a prominent teacher and his two daughters have already confirmed they will not return to her school next year due to the "humiliation" of the searches. Sister Hortense also said that since the closure of the gap, staff members holding West Bank IDs must obtain and renew work permits every six months to continue working at the school. She confided that four employees currently are sleeping at the school because of permit issues. She lamented that the school is no longer able to accept staff and students of families with West Bank IDs due to the permit and travel restrictions.

Legal limbo...

JERUSALEM 00000729 002 OF 002

16. (SBU) The closure of the gap has also impacted the legal status of families on both sides. There are some 30 families in Dahiat al-Barid on the Jerusalem side of the barrier, many of whom do not possess Jerusalem ID cards. They now fear that they are subject to possible eviction and deportation. In al-Ram, those who possess Jerusalem ID cards now will have a much more difficult time maintaining that status. They cannot, for instance, receive mail in al-Ram, so they must maintain a residence/address on the other side of the wall.

...and a security vacuum

17. (SBU) Business contacts told EconOff that the security situation on the al-Ram side of the barrier has significantly worsened since the closure. These areas are in "Area B" and PA security forces are rarely allowed to enter. According to contacts, Israeli police used to respond to criminal activity and patrol in the area through the gap in the barrier. They no longer do. Kirresh, the automobile dealer in al-Ram, told EconOff that he received no police assistance after he reported some of his vehicles stolen and vandalized. As a result, he no longer displays cars on his lot. Another shop owner in al-Ram claimed that his neighbor is now able to sell drugs openly, because the IDF does not give priority to countering drug peddling in West Bank areas.

WALLES